DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 982

FL 027 525

AUTHOR	Maum, Rosie
TITLE	Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers in the English Teaching Profession. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-FL-02-09
PUB DATE	2002-12-00
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0008
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016. Tel: 800-276-9834 (Toll Free). For full text: http://www.cal.org/ericcll/DIGEST.
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*English (Second Language); *Language Teachers; Language Variation; *Professional Development; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests; *Nonnative Speakers

ABSTRACT

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), a growing number of teachers are not native speakers of English. Some learned English as children; others learned it as adults. Some learned it prior to coming to the United States; others learned it after their arrival. Some studied English in formal academic settings; others learned it through informal immersion after arriving in this country. Some speak British, Australian, Indian, or other varieties of English; others speak Standard American English. For some, English is their third or fourth language; for others, it is the only language other than their mother tongue that they have learned. The strengths of these individuals as English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers are still somewhat unknown and are often underestimated by their colleagues and students. This digest describes the contributions that these educators can make to the ELT field, some of the challenges they face as teaching professionals, and ways in which these challenges are being addressed. (Contains 17 references.) (Author/VWL)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

FL027525

ERIC DIGEST

EDO-FL-02-09 • DECEMBER 2002

Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers in the English Teaching Profession

ROSIE MAUM, JCPS ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

ED 470 982

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL027525

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FL027525

ERIC DIGEST

EDO-FL-02-09 • DECEMBER 2002

Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers in the English Teaching Profession

ROSIE MAUM, JCPS ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), a growing number of teachers are not native speakers of English. Some learned English as children; others learned it as adults. Some learned it prior to coming to the United States; others learned it after their arrival. Some studied English in formal academic settings; others learned it through informal immersion after arriving in this country. Some speak British, Australian, Indian, or other varieties of English; others speak Standard American English. For some, English is their third or fourth language; for others, it is the only language other than their mother tongue that they have learned.

The strengths of these individuals as ESL teachers are still somewhat unknown and are often underestimated by their colleagues and students. This digest describes the contributions that these educators make to the ELT field, some of the challenges they face as teaching professionals, and ways in which these challenges are being addressed.

Status of the Nonnative-English-Speaking Teacher

The term *nonnative-English-speaking teachers* (NNESTs) has created a division among professionals in the ELT profession. Supporters of the term believe that it is necessary to distinguish between native- and nonnative-English-speaking teachers because their differences are, in fact, their strengths and should be recognized. Those who oppose the dichotomy feel that differentiating among teachers based on their status as native or nonnative speakers perpetuates the dominance of the native speaker in the ELT profession and contributes to discrimination in hiring practices.

Native English speakers without teaching qualifications are more likely to be hired as ESL teachers than qualified and experienced NNESTs, especially outside the United States (Amin, 2000; Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Rampton, 1996). But many in the profession argue that teaching credentials should be required of all English teachers, regardless of their native language (Nayar, 1994; Phillipson, 1996). This would shift the emphasis in hiring from *who* the job candidates are (i.e., native or nonnative speakers of English) to *what* they are (i.e., qualified English teachers) and allow for more democratic employment practices.

Phillipson (1996) uses the phrase "the native speaker fallacy" to refer to unfair treatment of qualified NNESTs. The term was coined as a reaction to the tenet created at the 1961 Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Makarere, Uganda, which stated that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker. There is no doubt that native speakers of a language have a feel for its nuances, are comfortable using its idiomatic expressions, and speak it fluently. However, the Makarere tenet is flawed: People do not become qualified to teach English merely because it is their mother tongue, and much of the knowledge that native speakers bring intrinsically to the ESL classroom can be learned by NNESTs through teacher training. Phillipson (1996), for example, points out that nonnative speakers can learn to use idioms appropriately, to appreciate the cultural connotations of the language, and to determine whether a given language form is correct. In addition, there are many ways in which nonnative teachers are at an advantage in teaching English.

Strengths of NNESTs

Phillipson (1996) considers NNESTs to be potentially the ideal ESL teachers because they have gone through the process of acquiring English as an additional language. They have first-hand experience in learning and using a second language, and their personal experience has sensitized them to the linguistic and cultural needs of their students. Many NNESTs, especially those who have the same first language as their students, have developed a keen awareness of the differences between English and their students' mother tongue. This sensitivity gives them the ability to anticipate their students' linguistic problems.

Medgyes (1996) conducted a survey of native-English-speaking teachers and NNESTs working in 10 countries to determine their success in teaching English. He concluded that the two groups had an equal chance of success as English teachers and that the only area in which the NNESTs seemed to be less qualified—English language proficiency—was also one that gave them a certain advantage over native speakers. As compared to their native-English-speaking colleagues who can be good *language* models for their students, Medgyes (1996) concluded that NNESTS can be good *learner* models, having gone through the experience of learning English as a second (or third or fourth) language. They have had to adopt language-learning strategies during their own learning process, most likely making them better qualified to teach those strategies and more empathetic to their students' linguistic challenges and needs.

Challenges for NNESTs

The native speaker fallacy has created a number of challenges with which NNESTs must contend in the workplace and in their daily lives. Although the majority of English teachers in the world are not native speakers of English (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001), NNESTs struggle for equal treatment in the ELT profession. They face a number of challenges, including those related to accent and credibility in the workplace.

Accent

The issue of accent has often been the cause of employment discrimination practices in ESL programs in the United States and other countries. Lippi-Green (1997) found that teachers with nonnative accents were perceived as less qualified and less effective and were compared unfavorably with their native-English-speaking colleagues. Other researchers (Canagarajah, 1999; Thomas, 1999) also found that native speakers of various international varieties of English, such as Indian or Singapore English, were considered less credible and less competent teachers than those who come from what Kachru (1985) defines as "countries of the Inner Circle" (i.e., Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). Lippi-Green (1997) refers to this questioning of teachers' ability and credibility based on their accent as a form of linguistic discrimination.

Credibility in the Workplace

Issues of teacher credibility are encountered by many NNESTs in the classroom, where even students are influenced by the inevitable trickle-down effect of the native speaker fallacy. Some NNESTs have reported that many of their students resented being taught by a nonnative speaker until they were able to prove that they could be as effective as a native-English-speaking teacher. In reality, speakers of more than one language have both a sophisticated awareness of language and the ability to relate to students' needs (Canagarajah, 1996; Phillipson, 1992). Teachers who share

CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS • ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS • 4646 40TH ST NW • WASHINGTON DC 20016-1859 • 202-362-0700

the same language and cultural background as their students have an even greater advantage: Auerbach, Barahona, Midy, Vaquerano, Zambrano, and Arnaud (1996) found that they displayed an acute sensitivity to their students' needs and were better able to develop an effective curriculum and pedagogy.

In the English teaching profession, native English speakers grapple primarily with establishing their professional identities as ESL teachers, while NNESTs often have the added pressure of asserting themselves in the profession as competent English speakers. Kamhi-Stein (2002) claims that NNESTs' self-identification as teachers, immigrants, and language learners profoundly affects how they construct their classrooms and their instruction. She found that NNESTs draw on the commonalities among linguistic and ethnic groups represented in the class as a means to collaborate and create a community of learners; use instructional materials developed in countries outside the inner circle to offer a variety of perspectives; and use teachers' and students' experiences as immigrants and second language learners as sources of knowledge.

Solutions

Despite their many challenges, NNESTs are beginning to see themselves and to be viewed by others as equal partners in the ELT profession, both in the institutions where they teach and within the professional organizations that represent them. In 1998, TESOL, an international professional association that represents teachers of English to speakers of other languages, approved the formation of the NNEST Caucus. (In this context, NNEST stands for nonnative English speakers in TESOL.) This recognition has given nonnative teachers more visibility in the profession and has helped create a professional environment for all TESOL members, regardless of native language and place of birth (NNEST Caucus Web site, n.d.).

In the last few years, universities in the United States have seen a large influx of NNESTs into their masters-level TESOL programs (Matsuda, 1999). In order to meet the needs of these students, some programs have begun to include issues of concern and interest to NNESTs in the curriculum. A major advantage to this approach is that it gives NNESTs a voice in their program and provides opportunities for native and nonnative English speakers to learn from each other (Kamhi-Stein, Lee, & Lee, 1999).

At some universities, native- and nonnative-English-speaking teachers collaborate with each other, focusing on and sharing their particular strengths. Matsuda and Matsuda (2001) describe a study conducted with two native- and two nonnative-English-speaking graduate teaching assistants who were teaching a composition course for first-year ESL students while taking a practicum course on teaching ESL writing. They shared online journal entries to address various teaching issues—discussing problems in second language writing, reflecting on their own development and teaching practices, sharing teaching ideas and information, and providing moral support for each other. By sharing their strengths and insights from their various linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, the graduate students found that they benefited and grew professionally both as individuals and as a group.

Conclusion

Qualified and trained NNESTs can contribute in meaningful ways to the field of English language education by virtue of their own experiences as English language learners and their training and experience as teachers. Recent efforts, including research addressing the native speaker fallacy, the formation of the NNEST Caucus in TESOL, the development of innovative curricula in teacher training programs, and collaborative efforts between native- and nonnative-English-speaking teachers are helping to give NNESTs a voice in their profession and to recognize their position as equal partners in the field of English language teaching.

Note: *To learn more about NNEST issues, visit the NNEST Caucus Web site at http://www.unh.edu/nnest/.*

References

Amin, N. (2000). Negotiating nativism: Minority immigrant women ESL teachers and the native speaker construct (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, Canada, 2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 61*, A 4579.

Auerbach, E., Barahona, B., Midy, J., Vaquerano, F., Zambrano, A., & Arnaud, J. (1996). *Adult ESL/literacy from the community to the community: A guidebook for participatory literacy training*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Braine, G. (Ed.) (1999). *Non-native educators in English language teaching*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Canagarajah, S. (1999). Interrogating the "native speaker fallacy": Non-linguistic roots, non-pedagogical results. In G. Braine (Ed.), *Non-native educators in English language teaching* (pp. 77-92). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kachru, B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk & H. G. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literature* (pp. 11-30). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Kamhi-Stein, L. (2002, April). *The construction of a nonnative English speaker's classroom: Insights from a diary study*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Salt Lake City.

Kamhi-Stein, L., Lee, E., & Lee, C. (1999). How TESOL programs can enhance the preparation of nonnative English speakers. *TESOL Matters, 9*(4), 1, 5.

Lippi-Green, R. (1997). *English with an accent. Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*. New York: Routledge.

Matsuda, A., & Matsuda, P. K. (2001). Autonomy and collaboration in teacher education: Journal sharing among native and nonnative English-speaking teachers. *The CATESOL Journal, 13*(1), 109-121.

Matsuda, P. (1999). Teacher development through NS/NNS collaboration. *TESOL Matters, 9*(6), 1, 10.

Medgyes, P. (1996). Native or non-native: Who's worth more? In T. Hedge & N. Whitney (Eds.), *Power, pedagogy & practice* (pp. 31-42). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nayar, P. B. (1994). Whose English is it? *TESL-EJ, 1*(1), F-1. Retrieved April 28, 2002, from http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej01/f.1.html.

NNEST Caucus Website. Caucus Goals. (n.d.). Retrieved November 25, 2002, from http://www.unh.edu/nnest/purpose.html

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, R. (1996). ELT: The native speaker's burden. In T. Hedge & N. Whitney (Eds.), *Power, pedagogy & practice* (pp. 23-30). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rampton, M. B. H. (1996). Displacing the "native speaker": Expertise, affiliation, and inheritance. In T. Hedge & N. Whitney (Eds.), *Power, pedagogy & practice* (pp. 9-22). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thomas, J. (1999). Voices from the periphery: Non-native teachers and issues of credibility. In G. Braine (Ed.), *Non-native educators in English language teaching* (pp. 5-13). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

This digest was prepared with funding from the U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Library of Education, under contract no. ED-99-CO-0008. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of ED, OERI, or NLE.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[ ] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[X] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").